



Digital Preservation in State Government Best Practices Exchange 2006

<http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/digidocs/bestpractices/index.html>

Summary of the “Identification, Selection, and Appraisal of Digital Assets” Sessions **Compiled by Jennifer Ricker, Digital State Documents Librarian**

There were four exchange sessions on the topic of identification, selection, and appraisal of digital assets where speakers from the Library of Congress, the Government Printing Office, Florida International University, North Carolina State University, Appalachian State University, and the states of North Carolina, Florida, Virginia, South Carolina, New Mexico, and Michigan presented information about their experiences. The discussion focused on identification, selection, and appraisal methods used in currently operating digital preservation projects, the stumbling blocks that were encountered in the identification, selection, and appraisal process, and the level of success that was finally achieved.

There are three common threads that ran through these sessions – lack of stakeholder cooperation, difficulty defining appropriate appraisal criteria, and need to create and promote standards/policy documentation. With respect to the lack of cooperation between stakeholders, the experiences differed. Many speakers found a reluctance amongst state agencies to cooperate by identifying and/or sharing content, some felt as though they were on their own in their digitization program because they weren't even made aware of other digitization projects that might be occurring in their states, and others worked hard to identify stakeholders and build relationships with them that foster a collaborative relationship. The ideal situation seems to occur when participants can identify and involve stakeholders upfront, define roles and responsibilities, and keep open lines of communication between stakeholders as the project matures. In regards to the difficulty defining appropriate appraisal criteria, the consensus is that it is very difficult to know what will be important in the future, but that it is important to identify and appraise at-risk information first. There is also some agreement that appraisal criteria should include user needs, content, and size constraints. However, participants were unsure of the role that format should play in the appraisal process – though most felt the focus should be on content over format. On the subject of the importance of creating standards/policies and educating collaborators on these documents, participants felt strongly that these documents need to address born-digital, paper, and digitized information. There is also some concern that because of the volume of information traditional records-based appraisal techniques will not be efficient. To combat this issue some participants have turned to functional appraisal, but they recommend doing a cost/benefit analysis before making such a decision.

Participants did not limit their discussion in these sessions strictly to issues surrounding the identification, selection, and appraisal process; they also discussed more overarching issues regarding digital preservation. For example, they discussed the need to be able to point to some authority for the digital preservation activities, whether it is statutory or just an internal agency mandate. Likewise, they discussed the importance of involving

and having the support of technical staff. Participants acknowledged that current solutions require technical expertise beyond that held by a typical librarian or archivist in order to operate efficiently and effectively. In addition, participants also emphasized the need for scalable solutions that can expand to whatever tomorrow's needs may be.